

## **The Reawakening** by **randomsmallguy**

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**Summary:** When the extraordinary El returns, the boys embark on a new and mysterious adventure which leads them into greater danger and even deeper into stranger things...

# 1. Chapter 1

## Story

Mike had always wished that the adventures he had had with El and his friends could not end. Little did he know that yet more were to come. It was six months after the events at the school, and Mike's friends-, Lucas, Dustin and Will were seated in Mike's room playing Dungeons and Dragons as they usually did. They were chatting about the game, their minds at ease. Dustin was advising Will on some move he could make and Will and Lucas were concentrating hard on the game. "Your turn now, Mike", Lucas said. Mike nodded slightly nonchalantly. He suspected his friends had noticed he had been behaving oddly recently. The truth was he wasn't completely sure that what had happened to them all six months ago had been their experiences. It felt as though he might have been looking down the wrong end of a telescope at someone else's life.

He took the dice, shook them in his hand and was about to let them roll on the board when he heard a voice speak his name. "Mike?" He froze, his heart pounding. The dice fell from his hand and clattered onto the wooden floor. "Mike, are you there?" There could be no mistaking that voice. "What's wrong, Mike? Are you okay?" It was Will who had spoken, and Mike only seemed to register these words from a distance. Mike stood up abruptly, his chair falling over backwards. "We need to go, now", he told the others. "What? Go where? It's late", protested Lucas. "I'm not sure", but I think..." He took a deep breath. "I think El might still be alive". His friends stared at him, silent, shocked by his statement. "Where are we going?" Dustin asked. Will looked straight at him and replied: "The Upside-Down".

The three of them set off immediately. They grabbed their coats, got on their bikes and rode out into the night. They weren't sure where they were going, but somehow Mike could sense...something. El's voice guiding them to where they needed to go, though they didn't know what they might find. Eventually, they came to a halt. They were standing in front of a pool. The moonlight glinted and flashed upon the water, like liquid starlight. It was completely calm.

Tranquil. Silent. The trees behind them seemed to whistle with the wind, and with them came a voice, strong through the breeze. "I am here". The very air around them seemed to ripple, distorting like a curtain. It seemed to split, and from beyond it came a howling sound, as though a gateway to hell had just opened. A figure rose up from the wind and darkness, and stepped forward into the forest. The gateway snapped shut. The boys stood motionless. "Hello", said El.

## 2. Chapter 2

### Chapter 2

"El". It was Mike who broke the silence. "How can you be here?" spluttered Lucas. "Isn't it obvious?" replied Dustin. "She used her mind powers. Good to see you again, weirdo". They all grinned at each other, ecstatic to be united again with the extraordinary girl who had changed their lives. However, El's smile seemed to falter after they'd all greeted her again, and Mike could tell by her face that it wasn't because Dustin was asking her to make him fly with her 'mind powers'. This was something serious. She turned to him. "What is it?", he asked her, slightly afraid of an answer. "We're not safe", she replied, looking scared. "I survived sending the monster to the Upside-Down but I got stranded there and something..." she took a deep breath. "Something tried to follow me back. Something... bad." she finished. They all looked confused. "What, you mean something from Hawkins?" Lucas asked. "That shit was messed up..." They wrapped her in their own coats and trudged slowly back to Mike's house. They fed her on bread and butter and hot chocolate. She gulped down the food as though she had forgotten what it was to eat. They managed to make a new den using old blankets on the sofa and a few cushions stolen from the living room. They helped her to sit down on the blanket, her eyes drooping slightly, and sat quietly, just watching her. Finally Dustin and Lucas left to return home, gathering up their things and riding off on their bikes into the night. Mike and El sat alone and talked. "I always knew", Mike began. "I always knew that you couldn't really be dead. I just...sensed it." He finished. "Well, you were right. It's just a shame that we couldn't go to that dance". Mike flushed slightly. "We-we could always do it now", he said. They stood in the centre of the room and took each other's hands, their fingers intertwined. There was no music, so they simply swayed back and forth, the rhythm seemingly inside their heads. El was exhausted, but seemed relaxed. Perhaps it was just the touch of another person after returning from the dark and desolate Upside-Down. Yet, Mike felt it was more than that, and though he did not make a noise, he was smiling from ear to ear, his head on her shoulder, hers on his, as he came to a happy conclusion of what this might mean. And up above, the stars twinkled brightly, seeming to grin down at him.

### 3. Chapter 3

#### Chapter 3

Will was dreaming. Visions swirled in his head, half-complete thoughts that didn't quite make sense; an old, run-down building, a figure formed from swirling fog, and a face. A terrible face, grotesque like a mask, but horribly real and coming closer. Always closer. The face rushed towards him, looming over his cowering figure...and struck. He woke up, his heart pounding, sweat, soaking his body.

Nancy's ears stung from the shrill sound of the bell. She pushed her locker door shut, stuffed her things in her bag, and started to walk down the now-mostly-empty corridor. She was so engrossed in her own thoughts; of school and home and Steve and everything that had happened in the last six months, that she almost walked into someone coming in her direction. She looked up and attempted to swerve round whoever it was, but lost her balance and dropped some papers she was carrying. Scrambling for her things and forming some bad excuse for why her homework was late, she did not see who it was. When she turned to face the figure, she was surprised. "Jonathan!" she said. He looked at her through his straight brown hair. "Hi", he replied shortly, before hurrying to straighten up and walk off. "Wait!" she cried. He stopped, still looking as though he wanted to carry on walking away, and turned back to her. "What is with you?" she asked. He looked as though he was struggling for words. "I-I just..." he began. "I'm not sure you made the right choice." She looked thoroughly confused at this. "The wrong choice about what? What do you mean?" she asked. "Do you feel that being with Steve is the right choice?" he asked bluntly. Nancy felt herself going red in the face. "Look, Jonathan, I think you're nice, and we're good friends now, but I just don't think-" "That's not what I'm saying", he interrupted. "I'm not saying choose me, although I do like you. I'm just saying...I'm not sure he's the right guy for you", he finished rather feebly. Nancy felt a sudden anger overcome her and snapped at him. "It's my choice who I want to be with, not yours. And if you've sunk so low that you want me to think that Steve is evil or whatever, then I'm not sure if I want us to be friends." At this he paled and fell silent. Without another word, he walked away, suddenly every bit the sad

and lonely boy he had been to her when they first met. She suddenly felt conflicted. Had she done the right thing. She did like Steve...but she suddenly thought. Was it right to turn someone down for another person who you thought you'd be good with, but who might not be a good person.

## 4. Chapter 4

### Chapter 4

The light streamed in through the window panes, picking up the dust and filling the room. El was sat in the den, trying to concentrate on staring at Dustin's model of the Millennium Falcon, which was steadily hovering in the air. A picture appeared in her head; a memory. She was toddling around a small living room as a small, hairless baby. She couldn't have been more than a year old. Someone else was with her. A woman, who looked as happy as anyone could be with their child. She had long brown hair and kind eyes and was laughing. Her baby self was chasing a toy bunny around the room that her mother was teasingly moving away from her. There was a knock on the door. The picture faded. The door opened, and Mike, Dustin, Lucas and Will entered. They dumped their stuff on the floor, pulled up a couple of beanbags, and collapsed onto them. "Hey", she greeted them. "Have you been practicing on the Millennium Falcon?" Dustin asked, amazed. "One of the wings looks slightly dented. Please, please practice on me. Just levitate me for 10 seconds and I promise I won't lose my shit". He stood up, expectant. Nothing happened. "Aw, come on. Just try a bit harder." "This is not what we were gonna talk about", interrupted Lucas. "Yeah, good point", agreed Mike. "Look, El, is there anything else you remember about the...monster?" She took a deep breath. "It-It looked like...like fear", she finished. They all looked confused. "What do you mean, fear", Lucas asked. She looked at him. "Like, when I looked at it, I didn't just see it. I saw everything that I was most afraid of, and that all just sort of, replaced it. Like the reason it was there was to find exactly what scared me", she finished. "But this was real?" Mike asked. "It wasn't just some, I don't know vision or trick?" "No", she replied. "Real". "Is anyone else worried that this looks strangely familiar?" It was Dustin who spoke. "A monster in this neighbourhood again." Mike caught on what he was suggesting. "But Dustin, we managed to sent the first one to the Upside-Down, didn't we?" "I'm not so sure", Dustin replied. "The Demogorgon always returns", he said, picking up the piece from their game and placing it on the table. Its black eyes bore into them and seemed to challenge them, as though it was saying one thing: "Come and find me".

## 5. Chapter 5

### Stranger Things Chapter 5

They decided on journeying into the woods, using El as their guide. It was on evening the next day and the air was fresh and crisp. The leaves on the forest floor crackled and crunched beneath their feet, making a sound unnaturally like bones being broken. They were wary, having come to terms with the fact that their adventures were not yet over, and that yet stranger things lay ahead. They had spent time planning on what they might do, but as ever, they were facing the likely possibility that this would almost definitely not go to plan. Their torch beams cut through the misty darkness and the warm and damp air clung to their skin. Or was it sweat, and the fear of what was to come that made them feel that way? Yet somehow they felt strangely calm, because despite all that they might be facing, and how little they knew about it, they were together, and that made them stronger.

They were still walking through the rows of identical tall trees when they noticed that one of their number wasn't walking with them. They all halted and spun around. Will had collapsed onto the ground a short way behind them and appeared to be retching, as though he had something stuck in his throat. "Will, are you okay?" asked Dustin. Will opened his mouth and a stream of yellow-green slime came slopping out. It had the appearance of old pondweed or algae, but it looked unnatural. They all rushed over, concerned. "Will!" Mike cried. Another stream poured out; Will couldn't stop. Suddenly he looked panicked and afraid, and cried out, pointing at something. They all looked in the direction he was gesturing in, but saw nothing. Just the black. Maybe he was seeing things. Yet they still felt uneasy. His fear seemed real and tangible, not just the result of some false image. He pointed again, and when they looked round a second time they saw something. A figure, a shape shrouded in the darkness but still visible.

"Hey!" Lucas shouted. The thing turned its gaze...and started coming towards them, quickly. As it came closer they started to see its shape. It looked about the size of an adult person, and a similar shape, but



its face was scaly and black. It hissed, and a forked tongue emerged from the cruel mouth, identical to that of a serpent. That brought a thought to Mike's mind. The serpent in the Garden of Eden, inspiring evil to humans. This monster seemed unnervingly similar.

It drew up on them, ready to strike – and a blinding red light filled their vision. The creature hissed and threw its head back, writhing. Its face seemed to deform slightly, like ashes blowing away on the wind. It scampered away. The light faded, and they were left in darkness and unenlightened.

## 6. Chapter 6

### Chapter 6

Chief Hopper did not often have very relaxing or peaceful mornings. And this one was nowhere near relaxing and peaceful. He'd been called about half an hour ago by his deputies. Some doddering old man had made a complaint; his newsagents had been broken into. 'Probably just some stupid teenagers trying to steal some sweets or something', Hopper thought. How often was so-called 'crime' now down to some pesky bunch of kids? Then again... His mind flashed back to the girl with Michael Wheeler and his friends. That missing kid...not everything was as it seemed. Stranger things might be going on behind the facade of everyday life's casual wrongdoings...for instance, some kids breaking into a shop. He sighed, rubbed his head, stretched and began to get into his uniform.

He made his way down to the small local newsagents. A police car was already waiting outside; his deputies awaiting his arrival. "So what's the situation?" he asked them. One of them stood up to reply: "The place is half-wrecked, items missing, and the owner swears he saw someone running away after ransacking the place but couldn't see who it was or catch them." Hopper frowned. "Do we know anything else about the thief?" he asked. "Only one thing", was his reply. "The owner of the shop swears it was a child." A child...Hopper's mind flashed back to a scene from his past. Sitting in a hospital room beside a metal-framed bed where his little girl had lain, sleeping. And not long after she would sleep and never wake. The tears he had cried, the hole in his life her absence had left, the pain and despair that had filled it. His mind jolted back to the present as the owner of the shop came shuffling into view.

"About time", he grunted. "I've been waiting for the police chief to turn up for half an hour." "Sorry about the delay, sir", Hopper replied. "So, what can you tell me about this child you think you saw?" "Think?!" the man replied, outraged. "I don't 'think' anything, I know I saw someone." "My apologies, sir", Hopper said, internally cursing and hoping the man would get on with it. "About "5,3", skinny, dark hair, overgrown, and he was dressed in rags". "He?" Hopper

questioned. "So it was definitely a boy?" "Oh yes", the man replied. Hopper felt a sudden twinge of sadness. Perhaps he had hoped to run into the strange little girl he had helped six months ago. He supposed it was silly thinking about these things. He turned his attention back to the man, who was still talking. "...maybe from an orphanage or someplace like that, I don't know..." "An orphanage?" Hopper enquired. Maybe it was worth checking around children's homes in the area to look for this kid, he thought. He had no idea what lay ahead.

## 7. Chapter 7

### Chapter 7

Joyce Byers had always cared for her sons very deeply. When her youngest, Will, had gone missing six months ago, she had desperately searched for him everywhere she could think of. People had thought she was mad when she jabbered about getting strange signals, her child talking to her through a tangle of Christmas lights. But she had not been crazy, although she still didn't understand all of what she had experienced. She sat musing in her living room when she was distracted by a knocking at the door. She got up and walked down the hallway towards the front door. She opened it and saw the face of Mrs. Wheeler.

"Hello", she said. Mrs. Wheeler returned the greeting but looked anxious, as though she was pondering on something else. "I think something's wrong with Will", she said. Joyce looked worried and confused. "What do you mean, wrong?" she asked. "Well he was with the rest of the boys last night, and they had been out somewhere, and they came back and he looked pale and sick. He's at our house now; half-exhausted by the looks of things." "Well, I'll come and pick him up, then", said Joyce, suddenly very pale-faced herself. God knew there had been enough crises with Will in the past.

Mrs. Wheeler left soon after to get Will and about twenty minutes later returned with him. He did look sickly; there was a small line of spittle by his mouth from where he must have thrown up and his skin was as pale as milk. She put him to bed and gave him a glass of milk; he looked too worn out to talk about what had happened to him, and she was tired herself.

She slumped into an armchair and was about to nod off when she felt a soft pulsating. She walked around the room to look for the source and came to a cupboard in the corner of the room. She opened the doors and found a small bundle of old Christmas lights. They were tangled into a mess and covered with a thin layer of dust, and white light was pulsating out of them. She stared for a moment, and then had a thought. She had used the lights to communicate with Will in this 'alternate dimension' when he had been missing. She still had the

alphabet letters she had hammered into the wall to talk to him...and they were lighting up. She stared, almost as though in a trance, at the dancing light, letters forming words forming a message. She looked closely to see what it said. I...W... As the words formed she felt trepidation turn to horror as the message was completed. It read: "I WILL FIND THEM".

## **8. Thank you!**

Thanks for reading. Please share if you like!

## 9. Chapter 8

### Chapter 8

From what Hopper had seen, the local area wasn't very busy; a smattering of small huts, some local market stalls, but nothing he would call exciting. Nevertheless, he had looked around the place for a couple of hours, spying out what he could that might help him in his investigation into this boy and the break-in at the shop. He received odd looks from some locals; doubtless they didn't usually have very many visitors, and even fewer police officers. Yet the place felt strange, tense, as though there was a collective angst about something, a collective fear. He got some directions from a young woman towards the nearest orphanage. It looked almost deserted, and about to fall down. He approached the entrance and knocked on the splintering wooden door.

Barely a second after his hand had moved away from the wood, the door swung open to reveal a woman. She looked old; her face was weather-beaten and wrinkled and her hands were peppered with wrinkles, gnarled like the root of an ancient tree. "Hello", Hopper greeted her. "I'm Chief Jimmy Hopper, is it all right if I ask you a few questions?" She looked disorientated, as though she had suddenly had a wave of amnesia. "Are you from the government?" she asked. "The government?" he said, suddenly looking confused himself. All of a sudden her features relaxed, as though she had had a sudden realisation. "Of course...sorry, you must be the Vicar". "The...Vicar?" he questioned, now completely lost. "Yes", she said, smiling. "He told me, take the child and care for him. That's what he said. He said he would have to hide away for a long time...such a long time.

"When was this?" he asked her. "2 months ago", she replied, still strangely calm. "7th April 1967". He stared at her. The woman was clearly mad. 1967? "Are you sure?" he asked her, making a mental note to ask one of his officers to take care of her. She was obviously deranged. "Positive", she replied confidently. "The Vicar asked me to look after him, above everything else, him. That's one thing I never understood-the name. Some sort of religious fellow, I suppose...I never asked him, wish I had. He visited me every now and then over

the years. Quite a few children came with him I must say-about 9 or 10...anyway, I only remember they called him Papa, but I suppose the same could be said of every parent and their children...". She trailed off. Hopper was too shocked for words. A face swam in his memory; the cruel scientist, secretive experiments, and in that moment he knew past and present had collided creating even deeper mysteries, and he was fearful of what lay ahead.



## 10. Chapter 9

### Chapter 9

"Well, what the friggin' hell do we think that thing was?" Dustin said. It was the following morning and they were back in Mike's house, discussing theories as to what they had happened last night.

"I don't know", Mike responded. He felt as though they were all extremely vulnerable, given that their knowledge of recent events was next to nothing. "Do you think we should tell Hopper or someone?" he said.

"Are you crazy?" Lucas said, disbelievingly. "We know absolutely nothing about this thing as it is, you think telling Hopper and alerting the whole town that something weird is up is in any way a good idea?"

"Okay, then", Mike said, resignedly. "We keep it to ourselves. But seriously though, that thing was...weird, it felt like...I dunno, something. And that light thing, that was crazy. It's just a shame we couldn't see who or what that was either."

"Felt like me", El said quietly. They all turned to face her. As per usual, she was sitting in her den in the corner of the room. "What do you mean?" Lucas said suspiciously.

"Felt like", she sat up straight and began to focus on the nearest object, a remote control car Mike had been given for one of his birthdays. The car began to whiz around the room in circles, with no remote. El brought it to a stop after a few seconds. "Me", she finished.

They were confused for a moment, but slowly clocked. "You mean, like another kid from Hawkins, in those experiments?" Mike asked her, shocked. She paused for a second, then nodded. "Yes".

Their conversation was interrupted by the chiming ring of the doorbell. "Wait here", Mike told his friends, before running to the door to answer whoever it was. He opened the door to see Will standing in front of him. In the driveway, he could see his mum

getting into a car, about to drive away.

"Look after him, sweetie", she called. "He's still a bit ill, so give him something to eat and take care of him". Will spoke: "We need to talk, Mike." Mike led him back down the hallway to his room, where the others were waiting. "Hey, Will", Dustin greeted him. Will smiled, but was looking at El, apparently waiting for an explanation. Mike noticed this. "Oh yeah, Will this is El, El, this is Will". Will held out a hand. She looked confused. Mike instructed her: "Take his hand, El", he said, "and shake it". She did as he said and soon Will was filled in by the others as to who exactly El was. After the explanations were finished, Will began to speak. "This thing with me being sick, I have an idea it might be connected to...where I was when I was missing". They all looked intrigued. He continued. "I don't remember much of what happened when I was...wherever it was, but there was a slug, or something, around my mouth, and I think it did something to me, and that's what made me sick".

"It could be a host", Dustin suggested. Their questioning looks prompted him to explain further. "Y'know, when you get a parasite, something that feeds off something else to make sure it's okay".

"But what does it want Will for?" Lucas asked.

"Not sure, could be any number of things."

Mike spoke, looking worried: "But if this thing can get to Will, who's to say it can't affect all of us?" This suggestion brought angst and worry to all their faces, and with that, they took their leave one by one, and returned home in the hope they could sleep without the promise of monsters in the dark, and safe.

## 11. Chapter 10

### Chapter 10

El dreamt of a forest. The tall, dark trees gazed down at her figure sombrely, wardens of an ancient place. Out of the shadows appeared a man. His hair was like straw, styled in straight lines that cut down his forehead. He wore a dark coat and otherwise plain clothes. He seemed to be waiting for someone and sure enough, a few moments later, a second figure appeared-a woman. She had long blonde hair and a tall figure. She would have seemed proud and happy if it hadn't been for the silvery tears slowly trailing down her face.

She looked at the man in the coat. "Why?" she asked him, sobbing uncontrollably. "Because I need him", came the reply. "Unless you want me to take both of them". "If I can't stop you taking him, then at least tell me why", she demanded. "Why do you need to do this?"

"For the future", came his reply. "The Russians grow stronger every day, we can't do nothing. Anyway, you don't have a choice. We will have the boy, and you can never see him again".

And the scene changed. El was standing in front of a small house. It was a different day, night-time, and the stars seemed to watch what was happening. She saw the same woman, but this time someone different was with her. A man. Her brother...no, her husband. They talked for a moment, and El saw a third figure with them, just for a moment-a child. The father took the child by the hand and started to walk away from the house, into the dark. Several minutes passed. Then, she heard a loud noise, a gunshot, a cry, and the picture in her mind faded.

She sat up, breathing heavily. She got up, left the room, and crept up the stairs. She had to talk to Mike. She crept over to his bed and shook him lightly. "Mike! Mike!" she whispered urgently. He stirred and opened his eyes. "Whatizzit", he said, rubbing his eyes. She quickly explained her dream to him. He looked intrigued. "Did you recognize any of the people in your dream?" he asked her. "No", she replied.

A sudden thought occurred to her. "Mike, do you think Will is okay?" she asked him. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, what if him being this host thing, the Upside-Down, it's all linked?"

"How is it linked?"

She tried to explain. "Well, when I came through the Veil-back from the Upside-Down-I used my powers to force it open, but I didn't close it behind me."

"So the gateway is still open?"

"Exactly, and that might be why Will's been infected by this thing-because it can travel between the dimensions."

"And that's how the monster got through", Mike finished.

They smiled at each other. It felt so good just working together, unravelling the tapestry of mysteries; learning, understanding. And both of them could tell that the other was understanding just how they felt.

## 12. Chapter 11

### Chapter 11

Nancy wasn't exactly sure what she was feeling. Ever since she'd shouted at Jonathan she felt terrible. She hadn't meant all of what she said, she just felt guilty-he'd helped her so many times and she'd just yelled in his face. She wasn't entirely sure who she was anymore.

"Hey! You okay?" It was Steve.

"Yeah, yeah..."

"You're such a bad liar", he smiled. "What is it?"

"I just...I feel awful about what I said to Jonathan. He's a nice guy, he just thinks he knows the answer to everything. I don't know..."

"Do you want me to talk to him", Steve asked.

"No, it's okay", she replied, straightening up. She walked out into the small eating area and sat down. The bell was about to ring but she didn't care. She had more important things than lessons on her mind. She was just about to get up and walk to her next classroom when she saw someone shuffling around on the other side of the courtyard. It was a boy. Startled, she stood up. He looked about 13. His hair was tangled and matted, and his face was grimy. His clothes were ragged.

"Hey, who are you?" she called over to the boy. He looked up, alarmed that someone had spotted him, and sprinted away. "Hey, wait", she shouted, starting to run after him. She sprinted, panting, until she was standing in the far left-hand corner of the courtyard. A few shrubs and trees were planted there. She crept towards them, and looked round the nearest tree. It had a hollow inside. The boy sat there, silent. He started when he saw her, but she tried to reassure him. "Shh, I'm not going to hurt you." He still looked frightened but ever so slightly reassured. "What's your name?" she asked him. He did not answer.

"Okay...well, how old are you?"

"I'm ten", he replied.

"What are you doing here?" she asked him.

He hesitated. "I ran away...from Papa."

"You ran away from your dad? Why? Are you afraid of him? I'm sure he can't be that bad", she said kindly. "Do you want me to take you back?"

"No", he said immediately.

"Well...you could stay here", she said.

"Here?"

"I could look after you." She stood up, ready to depart. "I'll come back tomorrow. I'll bring you food, and some new clothes." And with that, she left for her lessons. As she walked, she wondered how he'd ended up in that way. Maybe she would find out...sometime. She shook her head and continued walking.

## 13. Chapter 12

### Chapter 12

They met with Dustin and Lucas before school a few days later, and explained their realisations to them. They were surprised, and had many questions, most of which Mike and El were able to answer. However, they didn't have very much spare time as they had to be in for lessons, and about 15 minutes had been wasted trying to explain the concept of school to El.

They arrived at school late, so didn't have much time to talk when they were rushed into class by an angry looking receptionist who threatened to call their parents if they were "ever late for school again because of your bloody board game." At that they went their separate ways, to reunite in the courtyard when the lunch bell rang.

When the bell did go, Mike was so desperate to meet with his friends he almost knocked over a mean-looking 16-year-old. Nevertheless he continued, and spotted Lucas waiting and Dustin soon after him.

"So, have we got any idea what we're going to do now?" Lucas asked him.

"I'm guessing not", Dustin chipped in to the conversation.

"So, what have we got to go on?" Lucas asked, turning to Mike.

"I don't know", he replied. "Mind you, we could start with the boy sneaking around in rags over there by the trees." They all turned in the direction he was staring. Quite a few people had started to stare; the boy was hardly inconspicuous. He looked like he might be homeless. It appeared he was looking for food-he was rummaging around in the bins and had just picked out a half-eaten apple. He saw the three of them looking straight at him and tried to shuffle away.

They walked towards him.

"Who are you?" Lucas demanded.

"Why do you want to know?" the boy asked.

"Just answer the question", Dustin sighed. "Don't try to be badass, to be honest it really doesn't suit you, you just took an apple out of a bin and ate it".

The boy hesitated. "Ten", he replied.

"Ten, like the number ten?" Dustin sniggered.

"Yes", came the serious reply.

Mike was staring at him, eyes wide, mouth open.

"You wouldn't happen to have visited Hawkins Lab, would you?" he asked.

"The man with the grey hair, you know him?"

"Oh, yeah", Mike told him.

"Do you have any siblings?" he pressed.

"My sister", he replied. "But I haven't seen her for many years."

"We have", Mike confessed.

And in his mind he saw the face of the girl he knew, the girl who had changed all their lives, soon to be reunited with her brother at last.



## 14. Chapter 13

### Chapter 13

They rushed back to the house, almost overwhelmed by all they had learned recently. They stopped outside the door quietly clamouring, discussing what to tell El whilst Ten waited quietly just behind them. Lucas looked round at him and suddenly had a thought.

"Hey guys, I just thought of something. We gave Eleven a name, right. Why don't we give Ten one?"

"That's actually a pretty good idea", Dustin commented.

Mike thought for a moment. "Okay...what rhymes with Ten?" he asked them.

"Errmm...Well, how about Ben", Dustin proposed. "Ben's a normal name."

They all nodded in unison.

"Ben it is", Mike said.

They paused for a moment, then entered. They walked through to their base and filed into the room one by one. El looked up from her levitating Millennium Falcon and greeted them with a smile, letting the small plastic ship fall to the ground. Newly-named-Ben was the last to enter. He stepped forward and crouched down in front of El. She looked up and stared into his face, a questioning look on her face. He turned his gaze to the model resting on the ground beside her, looked at it long and hard, and it slowly rose into the air.

He turned back to her and suddenly she had a melancholic and faraway look on her face. She was still staring at him, and tears started forming in her eyes, pearly and silent.

"How?" she asked.

"Don't know", he replied.

"It feels weird", she said. "It's like I know who you are but I can't remember how I know. I can see you but I can't picture you. What happened to you?"

He hesitated, suddenly afraid to talk, as though he didn't like even thinking about his past. "I was first", he said. "I came to Hawkins before you did. They took me...they took me away, and they..." He took a gasping breath. "They tested on me, tortured me, used me. Papa, he-"

"Don't call him that", El interrupted. "He doesn't have to control you anymore. Don't think about him."

He looked at her. "I can't remember much. I have to find out what happened."

"So what does this mean for us?" Dustin asked.

Mike took a deep breath. "It means, Dustin, we're heading back to Hawkins Lab. But this time", he looked around at all of them, "we've got two of them", he said, gesturing to the quiet girl and the ragged boy sat in the corner of the small room.

## 15. Chapter 14

### Chapter 14

They spent the next few days trying to plan how they would get into Hawkins. It wasn't easy; they had to balance deciding on how they would infiltrate the place-which was of course heavily guarded-with trying to disguise what they were doing from their parents. Dustin and Lucas informed Mike that their parents had started to wonder why they visited his house quite so frequently; there was no keeping them quiet-that, they all agreed on. That was the way with parents. However, this did not stop them from carrying through with their plans. Their minds were steadfast. The prospect of adventure in this small and simple town had become so appealing to them since they first discovered the possibilities that awaited them.

There were a pair of guards at each entrance to the complex and at the door to each laboratory and testing room. From eavesdropping a conversation between a rather foolish guard and one of his friends in the town, Dustin had learned that the head figure at the lab was a mysterious figure named the Professor. This did not worry them too much though, and before long their plan was all drawn up and they had all the equipment they needed, or thought they might; a torch from Lucas' house, their walkie-talkies, a penknife, and of course, their two greatest assets. They sat quietly and did not make very many suggestions or even speech at all, apart from a quick "Yes" or "No". The three boys sensed there were other things on their mind; journeys of discovery that had nothing to do with sneaking into a secretive science lab.

On the eve of their great infiltration, they met a little way outside the complex to clarify exactly what each of them should be doing. Mike started to explain.

"Lucas, you'll be keeping a lookout hidden by the fence. Anyone comes our way, tell us on the walkie-talkie. Dustin, you'll go with Ben for extra protection. You need to hide somewhere, you go straight to where Lucas will be. And me and El will try and find the entrance to the portal that leads to the Upside-Down, and if we can, find out who this 'Professor' is."

He thought he had remembered everything when he heard a timid voice say: "And what about me?" He turned around. Will was standing behind the rest of the group. Mike had almost forgotten about him he had been so quiet. He thought for a moment. "You can come with me and El", he said. He felt bad for the other boy. With all that had happened since their last adventure, it had almost been like he had still been missing-everyone had forgotten about him, everyone thought it was just them. But no, he was still there. Mike wouldn't forget again, he promised himself.

They all nodded and were set to get going when Lucas pulled them all down and whispered frantically, "Stay low, there's someone coming towards us over there." He pointed to their left, where they could just make out a half-obsured figure heading their way.

"You think anyone's gonna care about what a bunch of kids are doing?" Mike asked sceptically.

"Maybe not", Lucas replied, "but it looks weird and suspicious as shit us just crouching here and chatting about breaking into a military-grade facility, dontcha think?"

Mike had to admit he had a point. They all lay still, hardly daring to breathe. The tension and severity of what they were about to try and do had put them all on edge, and they had become jumpy, wary. The figure was barely twenty feet away, and suddenly they could see who it was.

"Nancy?" Mike shouted.

From the look on her face, she might have fainted-In fact, she almost did. She was so shocked to hear a voice in the middle of the night right in front of her she almost keeled over in surprise.

"Mike?!" she shrieked. "What the **hell** are you doing here?" Her eyes slowly scanned the group slowly. They widened at the sight of Will, Dustin and Lucas-who she had not seen in her surprise in spotting Will for a start- then looked as though they were going to burst right out of her sockets at the sight of El and Ben.

"YOU!" she said, sounding hysterical, pointing at Ben.

"YOU!" she repeated, looking at El. Her eyes moved from one to the other so quickly that it looked as though she was watching a high-speed tennis match.

"This is too much", she gasped. "I come out here in the middle of the night", because I'm wondering about who he is", she pointed back at Ben. "Then I see you three with him", she continued, gesturing to Will, Dustin and Lucas, "then I see that the boy I talked to in the school courtyard is with you for some reason, and that girl with superpowers who died or disappeared is **alive**." She sighed.

Will thought for a moment. His sister's sudden arrival could prove to be useful. One extra person was always handy. "Nancy, we need your help", he began.

"Whatever it is, I'm in", she replied instantly.

"You don't even know what I'm going to say yet."

"Don't care."

He had to smile. On every other occasion his sister's stubbornness would have been infuriating. But this time, she was here to help. It looked like they had one extra person to aid them. *Just as long as she doesn't bring her boyfriend*, he thought.

## 16. Chapter 15

### Chapter 15

Hopper was to say the least, thoroughly confused. He was still mulling over the conversation he had had with the old woman at the orphanage; this boy, her peculiar memory of events. He was in his office and was about to have a rest from a hard day's work with an even longer sleep when the phone on his desk rang. He gave a tired sigh; maybe this day would never end. He reached forward and picked up the phone.

"Hello, this is Chief Jimmy Hopper", he said.

"Hopper?" It was Joyce. "Thank God you picked up! You need to come over here right away, I need to talk to you. My lights, they started to-

"Joyce", he cut her off, suddenly exasperated. "I know you were right last time, but...you gotta stop this. You got your son back, you got your boy back after searching for him for a long time. So now you have what you were looking for. So just stop, Joyce. Just stop and take a breath and go back to your normal life."

"Normal life?" she spluttered over the other end of the phone. "Hopper, I can't know what normal life is now! I-I-I can't re-adjust. I can't walk into a room and look at my son playing a game without imagining anything like that happening again. I might be paranoid but I can't change that."

"Well, as it happens", he replied, "I've started to make a few discoveries of my own." He quickly filled her in on his visit to the orphanage. "I've been thinking", he began, "This woman, she seemed...disorientated, confused, like she'd had something done to her memory...on purpose..." He deliberately trailed off to let her fit the pieces together, complete the jigsaw puzzle.

She quickly caught on. "So what, you think she has something to do with this mind experiment thing? MKUltra?" Now she was the one who sounded sceptical. "Come on", she jibed. "You were the one who

said I sounded crazy and now you're saying that-that some dodderly old woman is being mind-controlled by the government."

He hesitated. There were some things he'd rather not discuss. His views on some of these things had been...altered. he didn't fear the CIA or anyone like that now...he hadn't thought of them as threatening to him personally...but still...he felt...uncomfortable.

"Why don't I meet you somewhere?" he proposed. "And we can try and solve all of this, or whatever."

"Fine", she said. "But I'll have you know, Hopper, I'm not mad. And most times I'm right." She hung up.

He sighed and shook his head. Joyce Byers would never change.

## 17. Chapter 16

### Chapter 16

The lights glared across the compound, cutting through the darkness like a knife. Mike, El and Will were crouched low, their bodies pressed into the dirt, gazing at the facility. Ben had managed to bend the wire fence for them, allowing a small space for entry. They could see pairs of guards walking round in a circuit on patrol. They were dressed in dark blue uniform with heavy gear-which only served to heighten their suspicions. Machine guns hung at their waists, black and shining metal. They kept low down, trying to blend in, which, given their history of activities was a challenge.

Mike looked troubled. He turned to face the other two.

"We need a distraction", he said, speaking fast and urgently so as not to attract attention. "El, can you do something?"

She nodded slowly, then turned and focused her dark eyes ahead, screwing up her face in concentration. There was a loud banging noise, the fizzing of electrical energy, and the lamps all around the area faded, until there was only black. They could hear panicked shouts coming from the guards, the sound of people running, as they retreated back into the complex, probably to report the incident to some higher authority.

"We don't have long", El said. Mike was impressed. Taking out the lights had given them an advantage. They were invisible under cover of darkness to approach closer, and everyone would be inside the complex, instead of looking out to its boundaries. They crouched low and ran quickly, hoping to keep pace with the recovery of order inside the main complex. Thankfully there didn't seem to be any sirens. Mike assumed El had taken out the rest of the security when she busted the lights.

All of the sections of the complex seemed to be made of some lightweight material, so they didn't have to use El to break down any more barriers. They tore the small entrance with Lucas' knife from 'Nam to make room for all of them. The walkways were narrow-



clearly the number of personnel here was low, but that was only to be expected. They turned the corner and came face-to-face with yet more guards, but El dealt with them quickly, the cruel sound of bones and joints snapping before they fell to the ground, a slow stream of blood flowing onto the once-pristine polished floor. They jogged a little further until they came to a metal set of double doors. They forced them open and looked at the room that lay in front of them. It was large, with scientific-looking equipment and strange metal devices. They looked like flat armchairs, only metal, and with buttons on what might've been an armrest.

They continued further into the room, gazing around, exploring its unusual features. Everything was metallic and dull and grey. Suddenly, El and Ben collapsed to the floor, apparently dazed. Mike and Will rushed over and tried to bring them round, but they wouldn't stir. They heard footsteps approaching and turned around, alarmed, ready to fight. It was Dustin, Lucas, and Ben. Mike let out a sigh.

"Why the hell did you have to freak me out?" he asked, irritated.

"Pretty sick-looking chair", Dustin commented, gazing at the device.

"Seriously?" Lucas said, looking at him scathingly.

"What?"

"Anyway", Lucas said, "the guards have started their shifts again, and they're looking around everywhere on the complex, so we need to shift before they get here."

They all headed out of the room and started running but with the winding corridors that surrounded them they were left guessing and the weight of El and Ben on Mike and Will's shoulders, they were slowed down, as well as not having a clue where they were going. They rounded a corner and halted. Before them stood a group of 6 soldiers. They were powerless, defenceless...and captured.